

Makkata Sutta - The Monkey

(*Samyutta Nikāya*)

“Bhikkhus (Mendicants), in the Himalayas, the king of mountains, there are rugged (*duggā*) and uneven (*visamā*) zones where neither monkeys nor human beings can go; there are rugged and uneven zones where monkeys can go but not human beings; there are even and delightful regions where both monkeys and human beings can go. There, along the monkey trails, hunters set out traps of pitch for catching monkeys.

“Those monkeys who are not foolish and playful, when they see the pitch, avoid it from afar. But a monkey who is foolish and playful approaches the pitch and seizes it with his hand; he gets caught there. Thinking, ‘I will free my hand,’ he seizes it with his other hand; he gets caught there. Thinking, ‘I will free both hands,’ he seizes it with his foot; he gets caught there. Thinking, ‘I will free both hands and my foot,’ he seizes it with his other foot; he gets caught there.’ Thinking, ‘I will free both hands and feet,’ he applies his muzzle to it; he gets caught there.

“Thus, bhikkhus, that monkey, trapped at five points, lies there screeching. He has met with calamity and disaster and the hunter can do with him as he wishes. The hunter spears him, fastens him to that same block of wood, and goes off where he wants. So it is, bhikkhus, when one strays outside one’s own resort into the domain of others.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, do not stray outside your own resort into the domain of others. Mara will gain access to those who stray outside their own resort into the domain of others; Mara will get a hold on them.

“And what is not a bhikkhu’s own resort but the domain of others? It is the five cords of sensual pleasure.

What five? Sights known by the eye that are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. Sounds known by the ear that are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. Smells known by the nose that are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. Tastes known by the tongue that are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. Touches known by the body that are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. This is not a mendicant’s own resort (territory) but the domain of others.

“Move in your own resort, bhikkhus, in your own ancestral domain. Mara will not gain access to those who move in their own resort, in their own ancestral domain; Mara will not get a hold on them.

“And what is a bhikkhu’s resort, his own ancestral domain? It is the four establishments of mindfulness. What four? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending,

mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. He dwells contemplating mind in mind, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. Further, he dwells contemplating phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is a bhikkhu's resort, his own ancestral domain."

Here the Buddha points out the real protection of ours. That's mindfulness. It means the awareness of our body and mind. With details the contemplating on body, feeling, mind and mental objects. Whenever or wherever we are in mindfulness none can disturb our peace of mind even Mara can't. Buddhism has clearly explained the path of mindfulness orderly.

The Fourfold Mindfulness - *Satipaṭṭhāna* The Path to Liberation in Buddhism

All Buddhist doctrines that the Buddha has explained in his 45 years of life focus on how to achieve happiness. In the same way the Buddha explained the path of getting rid of suffering. The main purpose of all beings is to be happy. Although they do everything in the name of happiness, unfortunately, they mostly live unhappily, or their hopes end with sorrow. The main reason for this situation is though we do everything to overcome illness, death and separation, those things themselves cause us to create suffering again and again. Here, the supreme Buddha always preaches us how to overcome suffering truly and live with real happiness. If we can listen to his message and practice it in our lives, we can get rid of suffering and achieve real happiness in this life itself. **Mindfulness which is appreciated and recommended in Buddhism many times is one of the most important doctrines that we should practice for liberation.**

Buddhism explains the reasons we suffer. Birth is suffering. Decay is suffering. Sickness is suffering. Death is suffering... Finally, Buddhism concludes all sufferings in five aggregates. In short, arising of the five aggregates is suffering (*Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandā dukkhā*). The path of getting rid of suffering depends on understanding and releasing the grasping of the five aggregates. Practicing mindfulness is the path that leads to the liberation from the suffering of the five aggregates.

Mindfulness guides us how to live in the present moment. When we spend our life, we mostly live in the past or future. Unfortunately, we don't know that we live in the past or future because of ignorance and lack of mindfulness. We have lost the chance of seeing the beauty of the present experience. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind not to go to the past or future without awareness and how to live in the present moment seeing the world reality. Our success or happiness and how far we have overcome suffering depend on how much we have practiced mindfulness. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind to be aware of our mind and body. Mindfulness is the best friend who brings the real happiness. Mind with mindfulness is the best

friend. Similarly, mind without mindfulness is the worst enemy. We should be clever enough to live with the best friend getting rid of the worst enemy.

The importance of practicing mindfulness is always emphasized among Buddhist doctrines. Mindfulness is the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path; it is the third faculty (or *indriya*) of The Five Spiritual Faculties; and it is also the first faculty of The Seven Enlightenment Faculties. According to this, we can think how important it is in Buddhism. Mindfulness in Buddhism relates to wisdom which is the understanding of impermanence.

All Buddhist teachings can be included into one topic that is mindfulness. Our spiritual success and real happiness depend on how far we have practiced mindfulness in our lives. Practicing Buddhism means practicing mental culture. Practicing mental culture means practicing mindfulness. Also, practicing mindfulness means practicing happiness. Finally, we can say very clearly practicing of all teachings of the Buddha means practicing mindfulness. The entire dispensation of the Buddha depends on practicing mindfulness. Hence mindfulness is highly praised in Buddhism.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattānam visuddhiyā*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*sokapariddavānam samatikkhamāya*),

for the destruction of pain and grief (*dukkhadomanassanam attamgamaya*),

for the gaining of wisdom (*ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*)

for the attaining or realization of Nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna, Satipaṭṭhāna Bhavana and *Satipaṭṭhānabhavanagamini patipadā* Mindfulness, Mindful Meditation and the path of Mindful Meditation

When we discuss mindfulness, we can see that a lot of people discuss it everywhere in the current society. Mostly they say mindfulness is that living in the present moment. Actually, this is not an exact definition for mindfulness according to Buddhism. Mindfulness is not just living in the present moment. Mindfulness, which leads to overcome all sufferings completely, has a wide meaning in Buddhism. According to Vibhanga Sutta in Satipaṭṭhāna Samyutta of Samyutta nikaya, when he who wants to know and practice mindfulness should know three things about mindfulness. They are Mindfulness, mindful meditation and the path of mindful meditation. Mindfulness means keeping our attention in four areas as body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations. Mindful meditation means reflecting on the impermanence of the body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations as arising and ceasing. The path to mindful meditation means understanding the noble eightfold path which consists of the four noble truths as,

Right Understanding	(<i>Sammā ditṭhi</i>)
Right Thoughts	(<i>Sammā samkappa</i>)
Right Speech	(<i>Sammā vācā</i>)
Right Action	(<i>Sammā kammantha</i>)
Right Livelihood	(<i>Sammā ājiva</i>)
Right Effort	(<i>Sammā vāyāma</i>)
Right Mindfulness	(<i>Sammā sathi</i>)
Right Concentration	(<i>Sammā samādhi</i>)

Understanding mindfulness in Buddhism depends on understanding the dependent origination which is described below.

The *Satipatthāna Sutta* deals with the fourfold development of '*Sati*', mindfulness and '*Patthāna*', establishment or practice. So '*Satipatthāna*' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is to investigate what happens to our mind and body and finally understanding whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all sufferings that we worry in our day to day life and in whole *sansāric* journey.

Here it is said the four types of areas where we practice mindfulness. They are;

- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of sensation or feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind-objects (*Dhammānupassanā*)

According to practicing mindfulness in these four areas, we develop our attention and awareness about our body and mind. And we develop our awareness to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our attention with mindfulness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes the importance of developing mindfulness.

• **The Contemplation of body**

When we practice mindfulness in the field of body, we develop it in six areas.

They are;

- Mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpāna*).
When someone breathes, he does it consciously.

- Mindfulness of the four postures (*Iriyāpatha*)

When someone is walking, he knows he is walking. When someone is standing, he knows he is standing. When someone is sitting, he knows, he is sitting. When someone is lying down, he knows he is lying down.

- Mindfulness of clear awareness (*Sampajañña*)

When someone does everything from waking up to going to bed, he does all of them mindfully and wisely.

- Mindfulness or reflection on the repulsive: Parts of the body (*Patikkulamanasikāra*)

Here, the meditator considers all (32) parts of his body such as hair, nails, teeth, skin etc. are impure.

- Mindfulness of the four elements (*Dhātumanasikāra*)

Here, meditator further pays attention to the four elements; earth (*Patavi*), water (*Āpo*), fire (*Tejo*) and air (*Vāyo*). (Solidity, liquidity, heat & motion)

- Mindfulness of the Nine Charnel- Ground (*Navasivatika*)

Here, meditator recollects a dead body, what happens to the body after death (from the moment of death to a skeleton). While he is investigating his whole body according to above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of the body.

- **The Contemplation of feelings (or sensation)**

Here, someone feeling a pleasant feeling knows that he feels a pleasant feeling, feeling a painful feeling he knows that he feels a painful feeling, feeling a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant he knows that he feels a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant.

While he is investigating his whole feelings according to above information, he sees arising and ceasing of all feelings.

- **The Contemplation of mind**

Here, the meditator considers his own mind whether it is lustful or not, hating or not, deluded or undeluded, contracted or distracted, developed or undeveloped, surpassed or unsurpassed, concentrated or unconcentrated, liberated or unliberated.

While he is investigating his mind process according to above areas, he sees the arising and ceasing of the mind.

• The Contemplation of mind-objects

- The five hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and scruples, skeptical doubt)
- The five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness)
- The six internal and external sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind – sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, mind-objects)
- The seven factors of enlightenment (Mindfulness, keen investigation, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, equanimity)
- The four Noble truths
 1. The unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha Sacca*),
 2. The cause of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca*),
 3. The cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Nirodha Sacca*),
 4. The path that leads to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca*)

While he is investigating his whole mind objects according to above areas as unwholesome and wholesome, he sees the arising and ceasing of his mind objects.

When we practice mindfulness using Buddhist teachings, we don't stop with only concentrating the mind. With concentrated mind, we reflect on the world reality as impermanent seeing the arising and ceasing of our mind and body. Here it is very important to understand the dependent origination. Our entire life is the five aggregates which arise at the moment with conditions and cease when conditions cease.

If we have any experience through our six senses, five aggregates arise together at the moment. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedanā*-වේදනා), perception (*Saññā*-සංකල්පනා), mental formations (*Samkhāra*-සංකාර) and mind (*Viññāna*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they instantly cease when the conditions separate. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight. The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing everything ceases without leaving anything remaining. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (*Ahuttvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati*). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates. If something is impermanent (*Anicca*), it is suffering (*Dukkha*). If something is suffering, it is out of our control (*Anatta*). If someone can realize these three characteristics as the world reality, he is able to overcome suffering.

When we see this reality, we understand, there is nothing to grasp or reject. We realize that our life is a conditioned process. There is no particular certain being or person, it is only a process which always arises and ceases. With this true understanding we can gradually overcome suffering.

Little by little we go forward on the path of liberation from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. By practicing tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation with discipline (*Sīla*) in speech and behavior, we reach the final bliss of liberation, full enlightenment. Here it is clear that mindfulness is the foundation of all doctrines. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the Buddha. It means we are away from suffering like decay, death and rebirth. Whenever we are away from mindfulness, then we are in the field of the Mara. It means we are not away from suffering like sorrow, lamentation, grief, pain, decay, sickness, death and rebirth.

As the result of practicing mindfulness, the five spiritual faculties are going to be filled. They are confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

Also, practicing mindfulness is the way how to make the real refuge in our lives as the Buddha said.

Atta deepā bhikkhave viharatha atta saranā na anna saranā,

Dhamma deepā bhikkhave viharatha dhamma saranā na anna saranā.

(Attadeepa Sutta)

Dwell with yourself as an island as a refuge with no other refuge!

Dwell with the Dhamma as an island as a refuge with no other refuge!

This is the real way to make a refuge with one's mind and the Dhamma.



May the Triple Gem Bless You!

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